

Translation as an Emancipatory Act?

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Sometimes, but not always, individual group memories can be helpful in laying out perspectives, assisting one in understanding the structures that encapsulate cultural time. The following two anecdotes reflect such moments in history, and my time, with relevance for the arguments about translation in western hegemony that I am going to develop in this essay. In the mid-1960's, I was a young student at Åbo Akademi aspiring to become a teacher of English and French. For this to materialise, as I had not done Latin in school, I would need to spend the whole of my first academic year studying Latin to be able pass a two-directional translation examination, which was the entrance requirement at the time for all M.A. candidates at the Faculty of Arts (in other words also for students of history, arts, ethnology, and not only for future teachers of modern languages). It was a real struggle for all of us, a struggle whose rationale remained a mystery to us. For those who eventually failed in their Latin exams, this moment would forever, I am sure, symbolize denigration and marginalization; for those who succeeded, it was an entrance fee and recognition of a sort. So, I have asked myself many times, what was the real purpose of this segregating screening ceremony, this *rite de passage* in the name of translation, as it, amazingly, had very little to do with the acquisition of general knowledge of Latin grammar and vocabulary, mythology, customs, intertextuality and interculture?

To answer that question, one needs to situate, my view is, this particular time within a post-war Europe traumatized and broken into pieces, and the frantic reconstruction of a humanistic identity lost but to be regained. The post-war generation of students flocking at the European universities was drawn into an appellative imaginary of a restored Europe directed by the master narrative of Sameness and Oneness. To prioritize a classical language was just one variable among many others of this transactional venture. Euro-centric nostalgic vision of the predetermined human subject is one of the most aggressive ideologies on our planet, and at this time in our European lives it was considered more beneficial than ever. The politics of the pedagogic undertaking of making an exam in a dead European language a requirement for the passing of an M.A was a way (one of many) to re-assert a 'common ground' that more than anything else taught me the benefits of exclusion and unequal power relations. Maybe the protocol of such a stan-

andardizing Latin translation exam was to make obvious—not the difference—but the socio-politics of the gap between me and the Gypsy family who used to camp on my father’s land at summer time during my vacation periods from university.

To pursue the spatialised reading of my professional bio-history, some two decades later, I taught English literature at Umeå University, having become a migrant or translated academic. Now I found myself inside the ‘whale,’ experiencing what George Orwell fantasized about as being “in the dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter *what* happens. A storm that would sink all the battleships in the world would hardly reach you as an echo. Even the whale’s own movements would probably be imperceptible to you” (Orwell). This is one way of conceptualizing an English department, both in Sweden and elsewhere, in the pre-postcolonial period: an isolated enclave of prescribed modalities, standards, canons, and area-dependent normalcy, down to scrupulous apprehensions about British parliamentary procedures and the distribution of the vowel stress. Language teaching (grammar, literature, and pronunciation) was circumscribed by a centre-periphery dialectic where translation, in the metaphorical sense I am using the term here, functioned as a mode of promoting the “ontological imperialism” that Robert Young discusses in *White Mythologies* (Young 1990: 13). Interestingly, the model of teaching how to pronounce Almighty English words ‘correctly’ was named “Received Pronunciation,” a class-based southern British speech form, favored for long by the BBC and the private elite schools, spoken by relatively few people in the world. This ‘pure’ variant of speaking-well was the model for the education of the ‘masses’—colonized or not. “The attitude of the completest indifference,” which Orwell talked about, was upheld through educational policies of bias and bigotry on the basis of class, gender, and ethnicity; echoes from the external of the sanctioned English-speaking world, whether it was India, Australia or Africa, were hard of penetrating the skin of the whale. But in the end they did; the resonances, the “echoes,” proved eventually to be autonomous, indigenous voices speaking many dialects, writing many stories, even if, at my department, and at other English departments globally, the decentering did not attain the same level of revolutionary consequence as did the dismantling of the tradition-bound English department at Nairobi University in the early 1970s, when Ngugi wa Thiong’o and his colleagues replaced it with the new Department of African Literature and Languages, where African literature could be discussed and taught for the first time in its own right. But the repositioning that took place at Umeå was conceptually as signifying! So, the whale I had entered in 1980 was losing its privileges. Now, I am happy to announce: it is just one of many fishes in the pond, somewhat hurt, and, in these days, somewhat introvert. Even if the Empire is more monolingual than ever, it is far from monologic. Globalization, it is true, is heteroge-

neous and fragmented. And it is here that translation of difference that is the transmission, blending, and shifting of local experiences comes in.

This review of personal spatial history constitutes the frame for what I am discussing here: translation understood primarily in terms of power relations, figurations of language and difference, and politics of transference. As a research field, translation studies has expanded enormously within the last two or three decades, from being, up to the 1960s, a branch of applied linguistics involving text- and process-oriented, commonly called, 'pure translation studies' and 'applied translation studies', into becoming a heterogeneous subject, drawing on a number of methodological and theoretical viewpoints from an array of disciplines, including psychology, communication theory, literary theory, anthropology, and, above all, cultural studies, feminist, and postcolonial theory. In fact, these areas are now so intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish them. With these fragmentations, the area resembles far more an open interdisciplinary, or a-disciplinary, research profile that transcends academic restraints and specialties, which, indeed, is a welcoming move.

Translation in the conventional sense could be discriminated as 'boy meets girl' (even daringly: 'boy meets boy'), that is 'language meets language,' intersected with its favorite catch-phrases, such as 'source'-'target,' 'origin'-'copy,' 'centre'-'periphery'—dichotomies that presuppose some kind of recognizable, but often very fussy, system of mutuality. Opposing this politics of binary reading, Susan Bassnett, Henri Lefevre, Maria Tymoczko, and Anthony Pym, and others, advocate the idea that translation practitioners need to be far more informed with the text worlds they are communicating with, with their disparities and plural histories, and with their uneven positions in the global market-place of exchange. Translation as a form of interactive communication deals thus with issues that should not be narrowed down to the linguistic or verbal, but, instead, be assessed for what it tells us about the larger pictures involving politics, economy, cultural identity, difference, and similarity.

In his chapter "On Originality" (in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*), Edward Said discusses the relationship between literature (fiction) and theory, an analogy he makes that suits admirably the drive of my argument about conventional translation's concern with oppositions, contradictions and difference. The tension between them, Said explains, is due to West's obsession with the author as quasi-divine, a sacred genius, and the related, uninformed celebration of originality as an 'event'. On author heroism, he says: "A writer-*author* [in the West] suggests the glamor of doing, of bohemia, of originality close to the real matter of life ...; a critic/scholar-author suggests the image of drudgery, passivity, impotence, second-order material, and faded monkishness" (Said 128; his emphasis). Said continues:

Human singularity, and hence any originality associated with human endeavor, is a function of transpersonal laws that make up the patterns (psychological, economic, and intellectual) we call history, which is documented in thousands of written records. Therefore written history is a counter-memory, a kind of parody of Platonic recollection that permits the discernment by contemplation of true, first, *original* things. ... Thus the best way to consider originality is to look not for first instances of a phenomenon, but rather to see duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes of it—the way, for example, literature has made itself into a topos of writing. (Said 134, 135, his emphasis)

Said's attempt at demoting the conventions regarding the privileges of the source (what or who came first) is not a denial of genealogy and heritage studies and their functions in explicating textual history but a statement about creativity as a process that lacks a centre. The source text is plural right at the beginning; the translation is already translated; the translation is an embedded translation. In other words, following this lead, it is not the *per se* many translations of, say a work such as, *Kalevala* that promote or guarantee its longevity; it is what Said calls its "release of something" that does the job. This means that any new translation is drawn to that "something" conditioned by its social and historic specificity. Accordingly, *James Joyce* releases "something" from *Odyssey* into his narrative about Dublin, as does *Derek Walcott* also from *Odyssey* into his Caribbean poem *Omeros*; the Canadian poet *Janice Kulyk Keefer*, to take a more recent example, transforms Eliot's *The Waste Land* into her *The Waste Zone*, a lament on the human and ecological brutalities committed at the Quebec Summit of the Americas in April 2001. We deal with what Said listed as a metonymics of "duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes." It is translation as metonymy.

So the topic of power and difference is, indeed, crucial in cultural translation studies. The hierarchy that controls any categorization of dualities, whether it comes out of the nationalist homogenization politics of my university years in the 1960s' Finland, or that of neo-colonial exclusivity at an English department in the early 1980s, is deeply implicated by what Gayatri Spivak somewhere has dubbed "clarity fetishism" (cited by Braidotti 27) to define the West's fantasies about consistency, origins, originals, rationality, and so on, and its implications of their structurally contaminated others. And in this context, 'others' could be anything from the 'translator,' the 'copy,' the 'migrant,' and the 'refugee,' to Said's 'theory'.

Faithfulness, another dichotomous concept, has been an honorary term to categorize the translator's attitude towards the object of his/her rewriting. In feminist scholarship, the term is associated with disempowering cultural formations similar to a number of others used in translation theory that reflect patriarchal binary orders, such as 'fidelity,' 'penetration,' and 'conquest'. These have alternatively their reputed or infamous place in colonial

semantics. Preserving the authorial privilege, that is the prerogatives of an original, first, fatherly text phantom, reduces the ‘other’, here registered as ‘woman’, colony, and the target text, into a ‘second’ or inferior position through either demeaning overprotection or brutal sexual violence. John Donne’s, the English Renaissance poet and clergyman, famous couplets in “Elegy XIX. To his Mistris Going to Bed” illustrates in its entire condensed poetic erotica the whole spectrum (commercial, juridical, sexual, religious, royal) of translational colonial occupation:

License my roving hands, and let them go,
Behind, before, above, between, below.
O my America! my new-found-land,
My kingdom, safeliest when with one man man’d,
My mine of precious stones: my emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee!
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

Notice the taken-for-given postulation about the centre-periphery and its mutual but uneven relation; in Donne’s translation “my-new-found-land” refers metaphorically to any piece of territory to be colonized by the West for its wealth and, secondly, to, Newfoundland, the Canadian province (from 2001 called Newfoundland and Labrador) off the northeast coast of North America (Whitbourne).¹ His listeners knew what he meant by his witty double-talk about ‘discovery’. What is at play here is the translational commonplace of the original and the copy, a relationship founded on subjugation. A seventeenth-century poem such as Donne’s shows many similarities with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial texts in their translational masculinist aggression against the Other.

What is interesting here are not the frequencies and ontologies of such concepts, it is their constructiveness as rigid norms or universals, where the other is invited either to become the Same in a grandiose show of benevolence or simply expelled, that is unsettling—to say the least. In translation studies the binarist outlook has been extremely influential. Translating has been seen as building bridges between languages, between related units, cultures, even between nations. Finding the right pairs of equivalences and correspondences (whether linguistic or cultural) has been idealized in almost altruistic terms; equality and mutuality are two other ill-serving concepts in the conformist grammar of translation studies. However, if equivalence relationships are supposed to hold between a source text and a target text, which of them then defines the other? As translation theorists have pointed out,

¹ See Richard Whitbourne’s *A Discourse and Discovery of New-found-land* (1620) for its convincing colonial rhetoric in <<http://www.mun.ca/rels/hrollmann/relsoc/texts/whitbourne/whit.html>>

translation equivalence theory is, by definition, self-repetitive and circular: what one names equivalent *becomes* equivalence. One finds what one looks for; binaries are self-inclusive, not flat. ‘Bread,’ ‘bröd,’ ‘leipä,’ and ‘pain’ are not, by necessity, equivalences; they may project hierarchies and they are bound to release meanings founded on the ruling out of spatial-cultural or sequential-temporal differences. How can equivalence typologies, one can ask, whether we call them ‘pragmatic,’ ‘textual,’ ‘functional,’ ‘referential,’ and ‘connotative’ (they have many names), come to terms with the “incompatibilities between the worlds inhabited by speakers of different languages and ... the structural dissimilarities between languages.”² They simply cannot. The bridge metaphor is a fallacy. The differences on each side of the bridge need to be evaluated for their specifics. But the problem is as Gilles Deleuze explains in *Difference and Repetition*: “pluralism is a more enticing and dangerous thought: fragmentation implies overturning.”³ Let me turn to a few postcolonial texts to situate these comments with some more precision.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad writes as translator on many levels, Polish being his first language. Despite this background, he pursues and celebrates monolingualism or the root of One, the particular European exclusionary and dogmatic subjectivity that, we heard, rouses the imperial London poet John Donne. Kurtz and Marlow both succumb to the Other, in the novella mythologized and figured, alternatively, as African, Woman, or Beast; Kurtz dies, Marlow, the Englishman, barely escapes plagued by his pathetic tall tale, the white lie, a lie whose Nordic consequences could recently (March 2006) be viewed at the exhibition “Traces of the Congo. Scandinavia in the Congo—The Congo in Scandinavia” at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm.⁴ The language of hierarchical dualism is the monitoring language of Conrad’s novella: primitive-civilized, Africa-Europe, the Congo-the Thames, man-woman, stasis-movement, are some of the binarisms; the list can be made very long.

The first Swedish translation appeared of the novella appeared in 1949 and a second in 1960, that is, only eleven years later.⁵ The latter translation

² See the section on “Equivalence” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 2005) 79.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Paton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 204.

⁴ See <<http://www.etnografiska.se/smvk/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=122&a=5946>> 17 March 2006. See also the catalogue (Peter Tygesen [text] and Espen Waehle [photo]), *Kongospår. Norden i Kongo – Kongo i Norden* (Stockholm: Nordiska Kulturfonden, 2005).

⁵ I have discussed elsewhere the peculiar circumstances of 1) why the novella was translated so ‘late’ into Swedish (it was published in English in 1902) and 2) why a second translation was thought to be necessary only eleven years after the first (in 1949 by Louis Renner and in 1960 by Margaretha Odelberg; the last-mentioned is the standard Swedish edition). See Raoul Granqvist, “Romance and Racism: One Hundred Years with Joseph Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’ in Sweden.” In *Conrad at the Millennium: Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism* edited by Gail Fincham and Attie de Lange with Wieslaw Krajka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 467-97.

(by Margaretha Odelberg) recasts Conrad's text carefully to make it suit contemporary ideological writing on Africa (mainly that of Per Wästberg), harmonizing it with pent-up Swedish frustrations about "Congo," both as a region and a concept, and somewhat distancing it from Conrad's Victorian racial or racist rhetoric. In this Swedish translation, Marlow comes out as a more refined and anguished pan-European subject than the more robust sailor-intellectual-British colonial of Conrad's text.

It is also within the translational scheme of banishing spatial and historical meanings that Olof Lagercrantz situated his layered re-reading of Conrad, i.e., another ideological metastatement about Conrad, called *Färd med Mörkrets hjärta. En bok om Joseph Conrads roman* (1987). Africa is here again the invisible and passive part of a structuralist sign system, lending dominance and privilege to its subject-hero, the Swedish critic. His process of maturity both eludes and ignores the signifying other. The opposition between North and South is *the* theme of the book. Lagercrantz's paraphrase is overwritten with European self-centeredness, a statement about the impossibility of mutual recognition and the need for mutual specification. This was what my grammar test discourse had taught me as early as the 1960s. But we were now in the late 1980's, and Lagercrantz should have known better!

Sven Lindqvist's book *Exterminate all the Brutes* attempts at subverting the us/them binary. His narrative-travelogue-report operates on three synchronic discursive levels; as a pamphlet which highlights the links between Europe's imperialist aggression in nineteenth-century Africa, and former and latter-day genocides and contemporary racism; as a passage out of the colonial history that associates Conrad the helmsman of the *Roi de Belges* of 1890 with Conrad the writer at the Pent farm in Kent of 1898; and, thirdly, as a travelogue that takes the narrator and his computer-loaded library through a 2160 kilometre long bus ride through the Sahara desert. We encounter an agonized Swedish Marlow—but with a difference. Lindqvist's self-appointed role is not to tell the 'truth,' but rather *not to tell a lie* and thereby rehearse Marlow's—and Europe's—and Lagercrantz's mistake of speaking in innuendos or not speaking at all. The very first and the very last sentences in his book read: "You already know enough. I do too. It is not knowledge we lack. What we do lack is the courage to face what we know and draw the conclusions from it" (Lindqvist 9; this is rehearsed almost *verbatim* on page 242).

Lindqvist's three-partite novel is an attempt at getting to the core of experiences inscribed in this hermeneutic circle, at addressing it, and thus doing away with it. He promotes the secondary and derivative term 'Africa' into the position of superiority, reversing the hierarchy, deconstructing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Chinua Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart*, one could say, performs the same act of subversion but extends it to confront Western logocentrism and epistemology in a far more radical way. Well-known is the passage to-

wards the end of the novel, after Okonkwo has hanged himself, where the District Commissioner meditates on the role the ‘incident’ might serve in his future book that he had planned to call, “*The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.”⁶ Achebe’s satire (“a negative combating a negative, a form of balancing”⁷) is targeted against the colonialist discourse as represented by texts such as Conrad’s with its mute cannibals, or, more particularly, Joyce Cary’s novel *Mr. Johnson*. Achebe is re-translating or re-interpreting a whole tradition, the same colonialist writing that Olof Lagercrantz is rehearsing—not re-interpreting. Yet Achebe’s polemics in the form of writing-back is one thing (and we remember his diatribes against Conrad as a racist writer in the famous article he wrote in 1975⁸); another is, what I call, his narrative of translation. Let me elucidate some of its main features.

Let us first look at the originations of his novel. Achebe has told his audiences many times that he is a translator, a mediator, a *griot*, a storyteller who was just there at the right place and the right time; somebody else could have written the book, he insists. The work’s positionality both as a historical document (conceptualizing the ‘first’ arrival of the colonials to Igboland in the 1850s) and a contemporary one (critiquing the interface of the colonial and the postcolonial), its resonances with the colonial novel (that I already mentioned), and its interlingual, Igbo-English, translational communication (that I will say a few more words about later), all participate in formulating what Said called, we recollect, a non-Platonic “countermemory” that depended on an open system of “duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition, echoes.”

What is also a very significant aspect of the postcolonial novel as a genre, and not only of *Things Fall Apart*, is its transcendence of many linguistic codes that work together. Thus it does not make sense to distinguish between a ‘source’ and a ‘target’ as it does not make sense to search for a single source or its generic or genial originality. In his novel Achebe operates in a linguistic system inclusive of both Igbo and English, translating between the two, transliterating the Igbo voices making them ‘sound’ Igbo in English. The openness is also manifested in Achebe’s thematic. His use of, for instance, the Igbo concept of ‘chi’ is polyvalent, plural: the appended glossary translates it as ‘a personal god’ whereas in the text the term translates itself along the requirements of the context, each time re-configuring itself, recreating itself, recognizing the metonymic process of connection and contiguity. In his translational world-view equivalences have no future; fidelity, another

⁶ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958; London: Heinemann, 1965), 187.

⁷ John Clement Ball, “‘In All Fairness’: Satire and Narrative in the Novels of Chinua Achebe,” *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 88.

⁸ Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” in *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988), 251-62.

ideal in traditional translation studies, even less so. Infidelity in this context, I would say, at least connotes cultural resistance.

Does translating an African novel into Swedish mean an automatic improvement of the intercultural relations? It does not; it can be the opposite! Translation-as-substitution (which is the common practice in postcolonial western translation) is the same as inviting you to the table for a chat and then asking you to shut up! This is also what happens in the Swedish translations of two of Achebe's novels, in *Allt går sönder* (*Things Fall Apart*)⁹ and *Termitstackarna på savannen* (*Anthills of the Savannah*);¹⁰ in the first, the translator (Ebbe Linde) meticulously demobilizes Achebe's strategy of narration that informs his mediatory project of rejecting dogmas and codes, the monologue and the stationary. The Swedish translation transforms multivocality into a monovocality by suppressing the text's paraliterary devices of the gloss and the italics, rejecting repetitions, parallelisms, and contextual metatranslations, homogenizing and standardizing the language and the novel's complex value systems. Achebe's emancipatory novel is cut short and silenced.¹¹ The African *is* invited to Sweden, but ceremoniously undressed, cleansed, re-dressed, and then put in custody—to haunt us forever. In the Swedish translation of *Anthills*, to give you another example of translational misconduct, Pidgin-English speaking Elewa, one of the strong feminist iconic protagonists of Achebe's reformatory novel, is transformed into someone speaking the kind of language a migrant would produce after having spent a couple of hassled weeks in the environs of the Central Station in Stockholm. Elewa is reduced and simplified; her wit, stamina, and, indeed, linguistic competence are wiped out. She, too, is silenced.¹²

No, I am not crusading against individual Swedish translators, I am pointing at a pattern in European cultural politics of homogenization, and their

⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Allt går sönder* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1967). Trans. Ebbe Linde.

¹⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Termitstackarna på savannen*. Trans. by Hans O. Sjöström (Stockholm: Ordfronts förlag, 1989). Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (New York: Anchor Press, 1988).

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis of Achebe as translator in *Things Fall Apart* and the impacts of its Swedish translator, see my essay "A Postcolonial Grammar of Translation. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a Metonymic Text," in *The Creative Circle: Artist, Critic, Translator* edited by Angelina Overvold, Richard Priebe and Louis Tremaine (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 59-71.

¹² Here are a few lines to illustrate Elewa's speech forms in Swedish, followed by the original: "Förklara, vadå? Du inte gör jag blir förbannad ... Oj, oj, oj! Hmmm! Kvinnan alla tider åter sand i världen ... Oj, oj, oj! Men vi är egen fel. Om jag inte kommer parkerar häcken i din säng, du inte kan sparka mig som är jag fotboll?" (45) ("You explain what? I beg you, no make me vex ... Imagine! Hmmm! But woman done chop sand for dis world-o ... Imagine! But na we de causam; na we own fault, If no kuku bring my stupid nyarsh come dump for your bedroom you for de kick about like I be football?" 31). In a confusing comment about his stylistical options, the Swedish translator Hans O. Sjöström explains: "Here it [Pidgin English] is translated via a home-made Pidgin Swedish without any intentions to recreate a migrant's language, although it may look like that" (283).

share in converting Them into US; not to recognize the metonymic significance of novels such as Chinua Achebe's is to hamper their interactive anxiety. What a loss, I would say. In fact, the translations of postcolonial novels in a European context, whether they are Estonian, French, German, Spanish, and Swedish, subscribe to more or less the same paradigms of reduction and closure; there are very few that do not. The translations/translators find it *hard* obviously to contend with the multiperspectival, the polysemous, the hybrid, and the absence of canonized centres, and *easy* to seek solutions that assert the primacies of Sameness, Purity, and Oneness. There are many examples of purist and homogenizing tendencies in the book *Writing Back and/in Translation!*¹³

One theme in my essay has dealt with the ideological force of translation as a broad discourse substituting and selecting not only words and text in and between languages but also as an activity exchanging normative concepts between one field and another. The academic Latin test and the British whale in my life narration were both illustrative instances of transposition of ideas, or translation, as vehicles for ideological homogenization processes in post- and cold-war Europe. Notions such as 'centre,' 'unity,' 'coherence,' 'nation,' and so on, all well-known conservative discursive value guidelines, saturate traditional translation strategies. I maintain that it is such alienating directives that keep the Other's text from entering the centre and when it does, it is manipulated to become its own enemy. Methodologically, these guidelines work via privileging specific discursive principles; I have discussed at some length the western weakness in translation practices for self-promoting binarism, the source-copy hierarchy, the romance about the faithful female follower-lover, the illusive search for equivalences, and the defeatist desire for the original/the origin. This sign language is an active principle in, we saw, John Donne's love poem from the beginning of the seventeenth-century. To corroborate these views further, I discussed in brief the ambivalences of the Swedish translation history of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, pointing out how it reflects, on one hand, collusion with the colonial discourse (Lagercrantz), and, on the other, discomfort with its latter-day violence (Lindqvist).

The second theme concerned alternative translation practices and strategies signaling openness, contiguity, and contextures; metonymy instead of metaphor. Gilles Deleuze, Edward Said, Rosi Braidotti, Homi K. Bhabha are some of the theorists who have inspired me to look for intralingual features inherent in the postcolonial novel and advocate them, as I do here, as emancipatory. As an example, I discussed Chinua Achebe as translator/writer, emphasizing his nomadic, non-unitary vision of the subject ("The world is a

¹³ See the chapters by Ovidi Carbonell i Cortés (Spain), Christina Gullin (Sweden), Ene-Reet Sovik (Estonia), Tina Steiner (Germany), and Kathryn Woodham (France) in *Writing Back in/and Translation* edited by Raoul J. Granqvist (Berlin, etc.: Peter Lang Publishers, 2006).

dancing masquerade. Nothing is permanent”) and noting his performative tactic of translating the bi- or multicultural, and his ways of promoting openness (that was clogged in the Swedish translations). One is reminded of Wolfgang Iser’s credo about translatability that we are all in-translation, that translation is a fundamental concept of culture itself. Translatability, he says further, implies “translation of otherness without subsuming it under pre-conceived notions” (Iser 32). This ethics of difference rejects the rhetoric of translation understood as exclusion/inclusion, or as assimilation and reduction of the other to the same. The alleged difference between A and B “suffers from the metaphysics of the pregivenness of the two entities”¹⁴ (*differance*), as Derrida has taught us. In the essay “The Reason of Border or a Border Reason? Translation as a Metaphor of Our Times,” António Sousa Ribeiro explains that “translation is something else than a dialogue”: “The core ... question [is] whether those [translational] processes tend simply towards assimilation and reduction to the identical or, on the contrary, are able to put forward the *non-identical, which can only be done by keeping alive a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness*”¹⁵ (Sousa Ribeiro, emphasis added).

Sousa Ribeiro calls this ontology or spatiality a ‘border’ or ‘border reason’; others call it, alternatively, ‘the third space,’ ‘hybridity,’ ‘minority,’ interspatial, interstitial, and transgressive.¹⁶ I find these readings of translatability radical and emancipatory (we remember Deleuze’s comment: “fragmentation implies overturning”) in their emphases on the never-ending transgressions of social and cultural limits—their doubts.

I recommend a reading or re-reading also of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, or his latest novel *Shalimar the Clown*, not necessarily for *what* they may say about Islam, India, Kashmir, or about religion, politics, Western stereotypes and racism, and so on, but *how* they translate the multiple possibilities there are of comprehending the human subject. Rushdie’s and Chinua Achebe’s text worlds assist us in decentralizing ourselves to becoming less and many, while keeping “alive,” in Sousa Ribeiro’s words, “a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness.”

¹⁴ Tullio Maranhao, “Introduction,” *Translation and Ethnography: The Anthropological Challenge of Intercultural Understanding* edited by Tullio Maranhao and Bernhard Streck in <<http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/samples/sam1519.htm>, 4>. 19 January 2006.

¹⁵ António Sousa Ribeiro, “The Reason of Borders or a Border Reason? Translation as a Metaphor for Our Times,” in <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-01-08-ribeiro-en.html> 5> 19 January 2006.

¹⁶ See Boris Buden, “Public Space as Translation Process” [09-2003] in <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic96/bachmann7_97.html> 30 December 2005; Doris Bachmann-Medick, “Cultural Misunderstanding in Translation: Multicultural Coexistence and Multicultural Conceptions of World Literature” [EESE 7/1996] in <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic96/bachmann7_97.html> 30 December 2005.

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